

Preschool Delays: Moderate, Severe, and Speech/Language

What is a Preschool Delay?

A preschool child is one ". . . who is at least three years of age but who has not reached the required age for kindergarten. . ." (five by September 1), according to Arizona Revised Statutes (ARS) §15-761(23).

ARS §15-761(24) defines a preschool moderate delay as ". . . performance by a preschool child on a norm-referenced test that measures at least one and one-half, but not more than three, standard deviations below the mean for children of the same chronological age in two or more of the following areas:

- (a) Cognitive development.
- (b) Physical development.
- (c) Communication development.
- (d) Social or emotional development.
- (e) Adaptive development."

The results of the tests must be supported by information from a comprehensive developmental assessment and from parental input.

According to ARS §15-761(25), a severe delay is defined as ". . . performance by a preschool child on a norm-referenced test that measures more than three standard deviations below the mean for children of the same chronological age in one or more . . ." of the areas listed in (a)-(e) above.

A preschool speech/language delay means ". . . performance by a preschool child on a norm-referenced language test that measures at least one and one half standard deviations below the mean for children of the same chronological age or whose speech, out of context, is unintelligible to a listener who is unfamiliar with the child . . ." [ARS §15-761(26)]. Eligibility under this category is only appropriate when a child meets evaluation criteria and is not eligible for services under other preschool categories. A standard deviation is a unit used to measure the

amount by which a particular score differs from the average (mean) of all scores in the sample. Different tests have different standard deviations.

How Common are Preschool Delays?

In the 2002-03 school year, 9,566 Arizona students were classified as having preschool delays and received special education services. This number represents 1.04 percent of the 912,083 children enrolled in Arizona public schools as of October 1, 2002.

What Effect Do Preschool Delays Have on a Child?

Each child with a preschool delay has a unique combination of abilities and disabilities. Skills that most children acquire in the first five years of life need to be specially taught to children with a combination of deficits. A program which helps improve thinking, language, movement, self-help, play, and social skills is important for development of a preschool child's potential. As with all students, appropriate placement in the least restrictive environment is essential.

With advances in research and technology, especially assistive technology, children with disabilities can achieve at levels not previously thought possible. Assistive technology examples are: computer assisted communication, powered mobility, fixed and adjustable back supports, magnification aids, amplification devices, and specially designed switches.

As preschool children make the transition to kindergarten, the preschool category in which they were served is reviewed. Eligibility criteria for students, ages 5-21, is used to determine which disability classification for special education in ARS §15-761 is appropriate.

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References

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Books for Adults

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Cavallaro, C.C. & Haney, M. (1998). *Preschool Inclusion*. Baltimore, MD: Brookes Publishing.

Coleman, J.G. (1999). *The early intervention dictionary: A multidisciplinary guide to terminology* (2nd ed.). Rockville, MD: Woodbine House.

Miller, N.B. & Sammons, C.C. (1999). *Everybody's different: Understanding and changing our reactions to disabilities*. Baltimore, MD: Brookes Publishing.

National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities. (2003). *Parenting a child with special needs: A guide to reading and resources*. (3rd ed.). Washington, DC: Author.

Books for Children

Charkins, H.C. (1996). *Children with facial difference: A parent's guide*. Bethesda, MD: Woodbine House.

Gehret, J. (1996). *Don't give-up kid & learning differences*. Fairport, NY: Verbal Images Press.

Meyer, D.J. (Ed.) (1997). *Views from our shoes: Growing up with a brother or sister with special needs*. Rockville, MD: Woodbine House.

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Sensi, E.B. (2002). *All kinds of friends, even green*. Bethesda, MD: Woodbine House.

Thompson, M. (1996). *Andy and his yellow Frisbee*. Rockville, MD: Woodbine House.

Parent Information Network, 602-364-4015 or 800-352-4558, www.ade.az.gov/ess/pinspals

Preschool Special Education, 602-542-2727 or 800-352-4558, www.ade.az.gov/earlychildhood

Arizona Speech-Language-Hearing Association, 12256 N. 26th Pl., Phoenix, AZ 85032, 602-354-8062 or 800-705-7510, www.arsha.org

Children's Information Center, 150 N. 18th Ave., Phoenix, AZ 85007, 800-232-1676

Council for Exceptional Children, Early Childhood Division, 1110 Glebe Rd., Ste. 300, Arlington, VA 22201-5704, 703-620-3660 or Toll Free 888-232-7733, www.cec.sped.org

Enhancing Arizona's Parent Networks (EAPN) www.ade.az.gov/ess/eapn

Easter Seal Society of Arizona

www.az.easter-seals.org

903 N. 2nd St., Phoenix, AZ 85004, 602-252-6061 or 800-626-6061

7634 N. LaCholla Blvd., Tucson, AZ 85741, 520-745-5222

661 E. 32nd St., Yuma, AZ 85365, 928-726-6800

Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities, 1717 W. Jefferson St., Ste. 112, Phoenix, AZ 85007-3295, 602-542-4049, TDD 602-542-8920 or 800-889-5893, www.de.state.az.us/gcdd

NICHCY (National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities), P.O.Box 1492, Washington, DC 20013-1492, 800-695-0285, www.nichcy.org

Pilot Parents of Southern Arizona, 2600 N. Wyatt Dr., Tucson, AZ 85712, 520-324-3150, www.pilotparents.org

Raising Special Kids, 2400 N. Central Ave., Ste. 200, Phoenix, AZ 85004, 602-242-4366 or Toll Free 800-237-3007, www.raisingpecialkids.org

Organizations/Hotlines/Web Sites

Arizona Department of Education, Exceptional Student Services, 1535 W. Jefferson, Phoenix, AZ 85007